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CHARTER AND BY-LAWS

OF THE

RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REVISED APRIL 14, 1914

PROVIDENCE

1914

CHARTER & BY-LAWS *of the* RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Rhode Island historical society.

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CHARTER.

[Passed at the June Session, 1822.]

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Whereas, Jeremiah Lippitt, William Aplin, Charles Norris Tibbetts, Walter R. Danforth, William R. Staples, Richard W. Greene, John Brown Francis, William G. Goddard, Charles F. Tillinghast, Richard J. Arnold, Charles Jackson, and William E. Richmond, have petitioned this General Assembly to incorporate them into a society, by the name of the Rhode Island Historical Society:

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly, and by the authority thereof it is enacted*, That the aforesaid persons, together with such others as they shall hereafter associate with them, and their successors, are hereby constituted, ordained and created, a body corporate and politic, by the name of *The Rhode Island Historical Society, for the purpose of procuring and preserving whatever relates to the topography, antiquities, and natural, civil and ecclesiastical history of this State;* and by the name aforesaid shall have perpetual succession; and by the same name are hereby made able and capable in law, as a body corporate, to have, hold and enjoy goods, chattels, lands

and tenements, to the value of five thousand dollars, exclusive of their library, cabinet and historical collections and antiquities, and the same at all times to dispose of; to have a common seal, and the same at pleasure to change or destroy; to sue and be sued, to plead and to be impleaded, to answer and be answered unto, to defend and be defended against, in all courts of justice and before all proper judges; and to do, act and transact all matters and things whatsoever, proper for bodies corporate to do, act and transact; and to establish and enact such a constitution and such by-laws as shall be deemed necessary and expedient, provided that they be not repugnant to the laws of this State, or of the United States; and to annex to the breach of those laws such fines as they may deem fit.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted*, That the said corporation be further authorized and empowered to elect and qualify such officers as may by them be deemed necessary; to be chosen at such time, and to hold their offices for such period, as the constitution of said corporation shall prescribe; and to appoint and hold such meetings as shall be thought proper.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That said Society shall establish two cabinets for the deposit and safe-keeping of all the ancient documents and records illustrating the history and antiquities of this State; one of said cabinets in the town of Newport, for the safe-keeping of the records of the early history of the southern section of the State, and the other in the town of Providence, for the safe-keeping of the his-

torical records of the northern section thereof; and that the anniversary of said Society shall be holden in said Providence.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That Jeremiah Lippitt be authorized and empowered to call the first meeting of the corporation, within three months from the granting of this charter, giving public notice of the same.

AMENDMENT.

[PASSED MARCH 7, 1878.]

AN ACT IN AMENDMENT OF AN ACT ENTITLED "AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY," PASSED AT THE JUNE SESSION, 1822.

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. The said Rhode Island Historical Society shall, from and after the passage of this act, have and establish but one cabinet for the deposit and safe-keeping of its collections, and said cabinet shall be located in the city of Providence.

AMENDMENT.

[Passed March 6, 1890.]

AN ACT IN AMENDMENT OF AN ACT ENTITLED "AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY," PASSED AT THE JUNE SESSION, 1822, AND OF THE SEVERAL ACTS IN AMENDMENT THEREOF AND IN ADDITION THERETO.

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

Section 1. The Rhode Island Historical Society is hereby authorized to take, hold, transmit and convey real and personal estate to an amount not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars, in addition to its library, cabinet, and historical collections and antiquities.

Sec. 2. All acts and parts of acts inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed, and this act shall take effect from and after its passage.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS.

Membership.

1. The Rhode Island Historical Society shall be composed of active, corresponding, honorary and life members.

2. All nominations or applications for membership shall be signed by a member of the Society and sent to the Secretary, who shall refer them to the Membership Committtee, which shall act on all such names, either admitting or refusing to admit to membership each person so nominated, and shall then report to the Executive Committee the names of such persons as it has admitted. The name of any person refused admission by the Membership Committee may, upon the motion of any member of the Society, be brought before a regular meeting of the Society for action, and a majority vote shall determine whether the action of the Membership Committee shall be approved or reversed.

3. Any active member may by the payment of fifty dollars at one time to the Society become a Life Member, and shall thereafter be exempt from all assessments or annual taxes. A Life Member shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of Active Membership.

4. Active and Life Members only shall be eligible to hold office and to vote at the meetings of the Society.

5. Any person not a resident of the State of Rhode Island who is interested in the objects of the Society or desirous of promoting its work may be proposed by the Membership Committee as a Corresponding Member. A Corresponding Member upon becoming a resident of the State of Rhode Island shall cease to be a Corresponding Member, but upon his request may be transferred to the active list and shall then be liable for all taxes or assessments levied after the beginning of the next calendar year.

6. Any person who shall have attained eminence in history, literature, science or the arts may be proposed by the Membership Committee for Honorary Membership.

7. Names proposed for Corresponding or Honorary Membership shall first be reported by the Membership Committee to the Executive Committee, and shall not be submitted to the Society without the unanimous recommendation of the latter Committee.

Fees and Taxes.

8. A person elected to Active Membership shall be admitted to the Society upon the payment of an admission fee of five dollars, which shall include the tax for the remainder of the current calendar year.

9. Active members shall pay an annual tax of three dollars, which shall become due and payable at and after the annual meeting in each and every year.

10. Any member who neglects to pay the annual tax for the period of two years may, after a demand made by the Treasurer in writing, be dropped by the Executive Committee from the Membership roll of the Society.

Officers.

11. The officers of the Society shall be a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. These officers shall be chosen at the annual meeting in January of each year to serve until the next annual meeting and until others are chosen in their places.

12. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Society and of the Executive Committee at which he is present, and in case of a tie vote he shall have a casting vote. He shall be ex officio a member of each of the standing committees, and shall perform such duties as usually appertain to the office of President.

In the absence of the President and the Vice-Presidents a member selected by vote of the members present shall preside.

13. The Secretary shall keep a record of the proceedings of the Society and of the Executive Committee. He shall

notify the members of all meetings and shall inform the officers and the members of committees upon their election or appointment and shall conduct such official correspondence as usually appertains to the office of Secretary.

14. The Treasurer, subject to the supervision of the Finance Committee, shall have the custody of the funds of the Society, shall collect all moneys due to the Society, shall pay all authorized bills against the Society when properly audited, and shall keep the Cabinet and its contents insured. He shall also, under the advice and direction of the Finance Committee, invest the funds of the Society and change the investments whenever the interests of the Society require. At the annual meeting he shall present a statement of his accounts. He shall give such bond as the Finance Committee may deem adequate.

Librarian.

15. There shall be a Librarian and Cabinet-Keeper, who shall be appointed and his salary fixed by the Executive Committee, subject to comfirmation by the Society. He shall have charge under the direction of the Library Committee of the contents of the Cabinet or building of the Society. He shall act as Secretary to each of the Standing Committees, and, when requested, to any Special Committee.

Executive Committee.

16. There shall be an Executive Committee which shall consist of the officers of the Society, the Librarian and the chairman of each of the Standing Committees. It shall meet once a month. This Committee between regular meetings of the Society shall control the activities of the several committees and of the officers, except in matters relating to the disbursement of the permanent funds, the transfer of real estate and the construction or demolition of the buildings of the Society. It shall appropriate from the income of the Society the amounts to be expended by each of the Standing Committees and no liabilities in excess of such appropriation shall

be incurred by such committees without the authorization of the Executive Committee. Five members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum.

The Standing Committees.

17. The Standing Committees of the Society shall be:

A Membership Committee.
A Library Committee.
A Lecture Committee.
A Publication Committee.
A Committee on Grounds and Buildings.
A Committee on Necrology.
A Finance Committee.
An Audit Committee.

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18. Each of these Committees shall consist of three members chosen at the annual meeting of the Society in each year to serve until the next annual meeting and until others are chosen in their places. Vacancies on any of the Standing Committees may be filled by the Executive Committee or at a regular meeting of the Society.

19. The Membership Committee shall examine all applications and proposals for membership and also take such action thereon as is provided in the by-laws.

20. The Library Committee shall have charge of the books, manuscripts and other collections of the Society within the Cabinet or building and shall make needful rules and regulations for the use and protection of the same. They shall have authority to employ assistants to the Librarian and fix their compensation, subject to the confirmation of the Executive Committee. They shall expend all moneys received from the State of Rhode Island, in accordance with the act of the General Assembly applicable thereto.

21. The Lecture Committee shall arrange for the presentation of lectures and papers upon appropriate subjects.

22. The Publication Committee shall have charge of the preparation, printing and distribution of all the publications

of the Society and shall from time to time recommend such publications as they deem appropriate and of importance.

23. The Committee on Grounds and Buildings shall have charge of the grounds and buildings and see that they are kept in proper condition and repair.

24. The Committee on Necrology shall cause to be prepared annually for publication in the proceedings of the Society a biographical notice of each of the members who shall have died during the year.

25. The Finance Committee shall have the oversight of the financial affairs of the Society and shall advise and direct the Treasurer, who shall not be a member of this Committee, regarding the investment and custody of the funds.

26. The Audit Committee shall, before the annual meeting each year, audit the Treasurer's accounts, examine the Society's securities and make a written report of their examination.

27. There shall also be a Nominating Committee of five members, no one of whom shall be a member of the Executive Committee, who shall be named at the regular meeting of the Society in October of each year, which Committee shall report to the Secretary in writing two weeks before the date of the ensuing annual meeting a list of nominations for officers and for members of the Standing Committees; and the Secretary shall within four days after receiving the list mail copies thereof to all active and life members.

Meetings.

28. There shall be three regular meetings for the transaction of business in each year; the annual meeting on the second Tuesday in January, and meetings on the second Tuesdays in April and October.

29. A special meeting of the Society shall be called by the Secretary on the written request of the President or of any five active or life members. The call for a special meeting shall specify the purpose for which the meeting is called and no other business shall be acted upon at that meeting.

30. Written or printed notice of each meeting of the Society shall be mailed to each active or life member at least forty-eight hours before the time set for the meeting.

31. Eleven active or life members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a meeting of the Society.

32. The order of business at the annual meeting shall be:

1. The reading of the minutes of the last regular and any intervening meetings.
2. The reports of the Secretary, Treasurer, Librarian and Cabinet-Keeper, Executive Committee, Standing Committees in the order of their election, and Special Committees.
3. The President's annual address.
4. The election of new members.
5. Unfinished business.
6. Report of the Nominating Committee.
7. Election of officers.
8. New business.

At other regular meetings the order of business shall be:

1. The reading of the minutes.
2. The Librarian's report.
3. The report of the Executive Committee.
4. The report of the Membership Committee.
5. Reports from any of the Standing Committees having a communication to make to the Society or of Special Committees.
6. Communications received by the Secretary.
7. Election of new members.
8. Unfinished business.
9. New business.

Permanent Endowment Fund.

33. All moneys received by the Society by gift or bequest, not otherwise designated by the giver, and such other sums as the Society may direct, shall constitute the Permanent Endowment Fund. The Fund shall be kept invested by the Finance Committee and no part of it except the income shall

be expended for any purpose except investment or reinvestment without a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a meeting, the call for which shall have contained the motion upon which action is taken.

General Rules.

34. Members of the Society shall have the right to read, consult or examine the books, manuscripts, or other objects belonging to the Society, under such regulations as the Library Committee shall approve as necessary for their preservation and safe keeping. Members may take from the building such books as are not specifically reserved, under such rules and restrictions as may be prescribed by the Library Committee.

35. The use of the Society's collections may be extended to persons not members of the Society, under such regulations as the Executive Committee shall determine.

36. Any person taking a book or other property of the Society from the building shall sign a receipt therefor in such form as the Library Committee shall prescribe.

37. No manuscript or reserved book of the Society shall be taken from the building without the written permission of the Library Committee.

38. These By-Laws may be amended by vote of two-thirds of the members present at any regular meeting of the Society, provided that notice of such proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing at the last previous regular meeting and included in the call for the meeting at which action is taken.

At an adjourned quarterly meeting of the Rhode Island Historical Society held April 14, 1914, it was

Voted, That the preceding be adopted as the Constitution and By-Laws of the Rhode Island Historical Society and shall go into effect immediately, and that all constitutions, by-laws, votes and resolutions inconsistent with the preceding be and they are hereby repealed.

Howard W. Preston,
Secretary.

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